

Week of June 24, 2002: MaineDOT Flash Facts

Topic: Railroad Safety

Monday

Facts/Openers:

- With the onset of passenger rail service and higher speed trains, more attention to safety is needed at railroad crossings and tracks.
- On average, 8 vehicle-train crashes occur on Maine's public roads each year. There have been no fatalities from these incidents since 1992.
- Nationally, 425 people were killed and 1,200 injured in 2000.
- In about 50% of railroad crossing crashes, the driver ignored the active gates, bells or lights.
- Stop...Look...and Listen are still the essential rules to follow when crossing railroad tracks.
- Railroad crossing gates, flashing lights, and bells are there for your protection. Obey them for safety sake.
- Advance warning signals at crossings are timed to match train speeds. Never try to "beat the train" if the lights are flashing.
- Trains can operate any time of day or night, so always be careful at railroad crossings.

Wednesday

Facts/Openers:

- In Maine, there are more than 600 active railroad grade crossings located on public roads.
- Trains cannot stop quickly. At 55 miles per hour, on dry, level track, it may take a train one mile to emergency brake. (*Even a train going 30 miles per hour takes 2/3 of a mile to stop.*)
- Cross tracks only at designated crossings
- Be sure to look both ways before crossing any tracks.
- Drive across tracks only when there is room for your vehicle to completely clear the tracks. If traffic is backed up, wait for it to clear before you cross.
- Bicyclists should always approach a railroad track crossing as close to 90 degrees as possible.
- If the railroad tracks are wet, stop and walk bikes across.
- Walk, don't ride, scooters, skates and skateboards across railroad crossings, but only when it is safe to do so.

Friday

Facts/Openers:

- Severe dangers exist when unauthorized users -such as pedestrians, motorbikes, ATV's and snowmobiles are on the tracks.
- In 2000, 463 people were killed (excluding suicides) and 414 others injured trespassing on private railroad right-of-way and property nationally.
- In Maine, there were 12 reported crashes between trains and ATV's or snowmobiles from 1998-2000. In addition, there have also been several pedestrian fatalities during this time.

- Railroad tracks are for trains only. ATV, snowmobile, bike, pedestrian and other trespassing on tracks or railroad right of way are extremely dangerous and illegal.
- Railroad tracks and the rights-of-way are private property.
 - Trespassing endangers the trespasser and train travelers.
 - Trespassers are actively prosecuted.

Some final reminders:

- A train can come from either direction at any time. Look both ways.
- Avoid headphones and loud music when traveling. They can prevent you from hearing trains or other warning sounds.
- Slow Down, Look and Listen are essential rules to follow when crossing railroad tracks. Watch for vehicles that are required to stop at crossings such as school buses, buses and tanker trucks.